

HEALTH AND SAFETY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2025, 8:30 AM

ALEXANDRIA CITY HALL, COUNCIL WORKROOM

MEETING SUMMARY

The meeting began at 8:30 a.m. with an overview of the agenda: (1) Public Safety Update, (2) Follow-up on prior meeting ideas and progress, (3) Deep dive into the eviction process, and (4) CCJB updates and priorities.

AGENDA ITEM #1: PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE

Presented by Chief of Police (Introduced by Deputy City Manager Yon Lambert)

Crime trends: Violent crime remains down overall year-over-year (estimated 50–70% decrease in certain categories). While data shows crime is down, fear of crime remains a challenge. Additional resources and cross-departmental collaboration could help address community concerns. **Recent incidents:** Three violent events in the past 10 days:

- Homicide at Canterbury Square: 33 calls for service in 6 months; mostly domestic violence. Homicide involved known individuals, not random.
- Shots fired at Ben Brenman Park: Incident occurred ~3 a.m.; no shell casings or evidence recovered. Opportunities identified to improve patrol presence.
- Triple shooting in the Old Dominion neighborhood: Believed gang-related; Ongoing engagement efforts are underway, including mentoring programs and outreach by Hispanic community officers. Residents may be hesitant to report incidents.

Response to Public Safety Update

Key Questions Raised:

- What traditional responses are being used in high-crime areas, and what new or creative strategies are being tried?
- How are prevention programs being targeted, especially where gang activity is suspected?
- What community partnerships exist to support prevention and outreach?
- How are domestic violence calls being addressed, particularly at hotspots like Canterbury Square?
- What prevention efforts are happening within schools to address youth vulnerability to gangs?

Public Safety Response:

- **Traditional response:** Increased police presence, crime review meetings, ongoing 60-Day Crime Plan (extended due to trends), federal partnerships, and arrests of known offenders.
- **New/strategic focus:** Shifting resources from theft/larceny prevention to violent crime; increasing sustainability of crime reduction efforts; placing officers in neighborhoods for mentoring and engagement.
- **Prevention & Community Programs (ACJS and partners):**
 - *Gang Task Force Coordinator:* Runs GREAT (Gang Resistance Education & Training) and IPE (Intervention, Prevention & Education) programs in partnership with schools.
 - Staff working group on gangs (multi-department) meets regularly; next meeting scheduled.
 - Referrals for at-risk youth come through schools, social workers, and court services.
 - Partnerships with ACPS parent groups and community organizations (Casa Chirilagua, Community Lodgings, Tenants & Workers) for outreach, education, and family engagement.
- **Domestic Violence:**
 - Programs provide bilingual staff and support services in coordination with police and sheriff.
 - Focus is on tracking trends and ensuring community awareness of rights and available supports, rather than collective actions.
 - A targeted prevention/awareness approach at high-call sites like Canterbury Square is under consideration.
- **Schools & Youth:**
 - Partnership with ACPS is currently strongest around truancy prevention.
 - Councilmembers raised concerns about gang initiation risks in schools and asked about prevention strategies.
 - Chief reported no evidence of formal initiation in schools but acknowledged informal youth groups exist.
 - Plans to shift police/community engagement resources into neighborhoods during summer to maintain relationships with youth.

Next Steps / Follow-Up Requests:

- Update on outcomes from interdepartmental gang prevention meeting.
- Analysis of trends and targeted responses to domestic violence calls.

- Reporting on the impact of police deployment shifts.
- A comprehensive update on ACPS partnerships, including mentoring, truancy efforts, and School Resource Officer (SRO) programs.

AGENDA ITEM #2: MARCH MEETING FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

The group revisited discussion items from the March meeting, focusing on improvements to the jail and mental health system. Common themes were identified, with the most consensus around reducing **administrative burdens and data duplication**.

- **Administrative Burden:**
 - DCHS and Sheriff’s Office reported ongoing work to reduce duplicative intake processes and improve information sharing while complying with privacy laws.
 - They acknowledged some processes are still tracked manually and agreed to explore enterprise-level technology solutions, though no specific tools have been chosen yet.
- **Equity & Quality of Care:**
 - Concerns had been raised previously about whether inmates receive adequate care.
 - Staff emphasized that medical and psychiatric care in the jail is at least comparable—and sometimes faster—than services available in the community, where waitlists are common.
 - Acknowledged staffing shortages limit capacity but committed to continuous improvement, especially for substance use disorder services.
- **Council Follow-Up Requests:**
 - Deeper dive into data comparing community vs. jail capacity, responsiveness, and trends to help plan for future needs.
 - Continued exploration of technology and tools to streamline processes and reduce manual tracking.
 - Interest in identifying models from other jurisdictions that balance efficiency with privacy regulations.

AGENDA ITEM #3: EVICTION PROCESS MAPPING DISCUSSION

(Led by Ali Coleman, DCHS, and Mary Horner, Housing)

The session aimed to walk through Alexandria’s eviction process using a fictional case study (“Hannah”) to highlight how quickly rent arrears can escalate into eviction, the harm caused to families, and points where interventions could help. Stakeholders were asked to identify barriers, opportunities to streamline, and ways to reduce harm.

- **Key Themes:**

- **System Complexity & Harm:** Hannah's story illustrated how a short-term crisis led to legal fees, debt over \$5,000, court judgments, and lasting housing barriers, even after avoiding eviction. Participants noted language barriers, lack of time in court to explain circumstances, and heavy burdens placed on tenants.
- **Partnership Strengths:** Alexandria's eviction prevention work is nationally recognized due to collaboration among the Sheriff's Office, DCHS, Office of Housing, nonprofits, and faith-based partners. Sheriff's Office highlighted efforts to delay or prevent evictions when rental assistance is confirmed. Courts were also credited for past flexibility during COVID and ongoing docket consolidation.
- **Gaps & Challenges:** Manual and siloed data tracking across agencies leads to delays and duplicated effort; multiple offices may unknowingly work on the same case. Participants raised the need for better coordinated systems, shared databases (with household consent), and stronger alignment with ARHA and subsidized housing providers. Concerns were raised around the need for legal protections for vulnerable residents.

Next Steps: Explore integrated data tools, expand cross-agency coordination, align city and ARHA eviction prevention strategies, and consider legislative advocacy for stronger tenant protections.

Participants were invited to share additional ideas via post-it notes on the journey map before leaving.

AGENDA ITEM #4: CLOSING UPDATES & NEXT STEPS

- Mike Mackey (Court Services Unit, CCJB Vice Chair) shared a brief update: recent CCJB discussions have focused on priorities aligned with this group, particularly housing. At the last meeting, Mary Horner presented on rental assistance programs, and the CCJB will next discuss action items.
- The group agreed to postpone work plan discussion; staff will circulate a draft by email before the next meeting in September.

SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP ACTION ITEMS

As of 9/22/2025

Public Safety

- Provide an update on outcomes from the upcoming interdepartmental gang prevention meeting. (ACJS)
Follow-up: The International Sports Organization (ISO) gave a presentation on their recent collaboration with RPCA to provide a robust cricket program in Alexandria. ISO is dedicated to fostering the development of athletic and leadership skills among students.
- Conduct an analysis of trends and targeted responses to domestic violence calls, especially at hotspots like Canterbury Square. (DHCS/APD)
Follow-up: The Domestic Violence Program collaborates closely with the Alexandria Police Department to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive essential support services (such as safety planning and crisis counseling) regardless of where they live within the City of Alexandria.
- Report on the impact of police deployment shifts (e.g., placing officers in neighborhoods for mentoring/engagement). (APD)
Follow-up: The Alexandria Police Department continues to evaluate the impact of shift work through data analysis, including calls for service and crime trends. To support this effort, the new Crime Prevention Unit has been aligned with the department's three geographic patrol sectors, enhancing coordination, community engagement, and proactive policing. In 2026, the department's goal is to remap the city's patrol boundaries and beats based on data analysis, ensuring resources are deployed effectively to meet neighborhood-level public safety needs.
- Provide an update on ACPS partnerships, including mentoring, truancy prevention, and the role of SROs. (APD)
Follow-up: SROs, guided by the Triad Model, work as law enforcement officers, educators, and mentors to address the needs of our students and barriers to student success. In collaboration with ACPS and community partners, APD continues to develop supportive solutions that promote attendance, safety, and positive youth outcomes including the Alexandria Initiative for Mentoring in its second semester.

Jail & Mental Health System (March Meeting Follow-Up)

- Prepare a deeper dive into data comparing community vs. jail medical/psychiatric capacity, responsiveness, and trends. (DCHS/ASO)
- Continue exploring technology solutions to reduce manual processes and duplicative data entry and any models from other jurisdictions (DCHS/ASO)

Follow-up: CSB efficiencies include changing the position responsibilities for recently hired HSSI position to relieve some tasks from clinicians and the Team Leader, including data collection and preparation of some reports, shelter screenings, and Medicaid applications. Also, exploring emerging technologies and other efficiencies used by other jurisdictions to improve documentation and workflow. The Mental Health Team Leader is also working with the Jail Medical Contractor to find

opportunities for their Mental Health Liaison position to streamline service delivery by performing tasks such as reducing duplicative or unnecessary Mental Health referrals, as well as other administrative tasks that get passed to the Mental Health clinicians such as following up on Release of Information forms for medications and other medical information from outside providers.

Additionally, the ADC is set to implement a new Jail Management System (JMS) in November 2025 that is modern, more intuitive and expected to improve reporting and report retrieval. Additionally, ASO is exploring the use of Peregrine, which unifies data from various sources. How these may reduce manual processes or duplicative data is not yet determined.

Eviction Process

- Explore integrated data tools to reduce duplication and delays. (Housing/DCHS/ITS)
Follow-up: We are establishing a data sharing agreement between Sheriff, DCHS, and the Office of Housing to ensure DCHS and Housing have frequent updates on writs of evictions data, which will enable them to be more proactive and timely in reaching out to households facing evictions.
Additionally, Code Administration and Housing are evaluating an integration platform that would streamline data sharing between various City agencies (including Housing, Code, police, fire, and others).
- Expand cross-agency coordination, especially between city departments, nonprofits, and housing providers. (Housing/DCHS)
Follow-up: The City has established regular coordination meetings between Code, Housing, and Health departments, along with the Special Housing Team meetings led by Virginia Patton to improve inter-agency collaboration and respond to issues arising at various properties in the City. This includes:
Weekly Community Client Coordination Meetings: Office of Community Services (OCS) staff and nonprofit providers meet to review active cases, exchange information about client needs, and engage in joint problem-solving to address service gaps.
Partnership with ALIVE: Ongoing coordination to ensure that residents who are ineligible for other programs are promptly referred to ALIVE for access to financial assistance.
Monthly meetings with ARHA are now occurring to coordinate on various issues including eviction tracking and prevention and to help connect and conciliate issues between ARHA staff and landlords to minimize negative impacts on residents.
- Consider legislative advocacy for stronger tenant protections. (Housing)
Follow-up: The City is actively pursuing legislative advocacy through a variety of means, including the Eviction Prevention Task Force legislative subcommittee meetings (comprised of community, regional, and state leaders), attendance at state-level Housing Commission meetings, and presentations to Boards and Commissions in preparation for the upcoming legislative package preparation. We are also working to advance tenant protection legislation by connecting our legislative director, Wendy Ginsburg, with state-level housing advocates.